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AUTHOR Sampson, Delores
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ABSTRACT

Activities and teaching methods for involving children (especially young children) in literature are presented in order to establish positive attitudes towards reading. Ideas are provided for use with wordless books, patterned or repetitive books, books organized around a theme, and picture books. The activities, each related to specific children's books, include having children dictate group stories, predict what will come next, make their own "look and see" books, put random pictures in sequence, and engage in cooking activities. Further ideas are offered for developing language and imagination. Step-by-step guidelines are given for the following art activities: (1) torn paper art; (2) tissue paper collages; (3) block printing with styrofoam; (4) texture rubbings; and (5) flannelboard figures. The article concludes with a bibliography of 26 children's books which are used with the activities. (DC)

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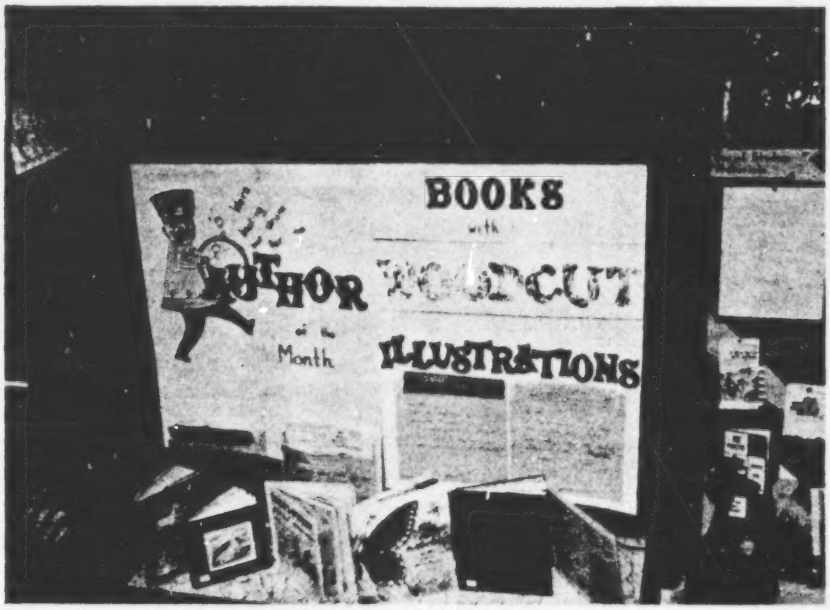

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by Delores Sampson

Introducing the Author

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Children and Books

By Delores Sampson
University of North Dakota

Ideally, children will have many experiences with stories and poems read or told to them during the time they are learning to become independent writers and readers. If the experiences are pleasurable and if literature is made an important and natural part of their environment, it is likely that children will establish positive attitudes towards reading and literature that will remain with them throughout their lives.

Planned experiences with literature for young children begin with an awareness of the potential of literature as a source for both affective and cognitive development. Literary resources become the instructional core, not a supplement to text materials; opportunities for literary experiences require systematic planning. Activities that promote language development and extend language awareness can be pleasurable and basic to preparing children for taking part in the world about them.

The purpose of this article is to help the teacher bring children's literature into all areas of the curriculum in meaningful and pleasurable ways so that each student will acquire not only a love for literature, but also a storehouse of literature-related information that will provide a solid foundation for future learning.

Wordless books are particularly helpful in stimulating language development of children. They have no text and encourage the child to tell the story from pictures only. Three elements peculiar to wordless books that make them particularly actractive to young readers are the following:

1. Children are visually oriented. Television has become a strong pervasive element in the lives of most children.
2. It is not necessary to read well to derive pleasure from following the plot of wordless books.
3. Wordless books allow a wider interpretation of the author's message than books with words.

A teacher can provide opportunities for her/his class to share a wordless book by having them dictate a group story. As the children respond to each page, the teacher writes down their observations. Older children can view the book and write down either their interpretation of the story or their reactions to the story.

DEEP IN THE FOREST by Brinton Turkle is the story of Baby Bear going to visit the home of Goldilocks. The familiar episodes of GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS are recounted in picture; but the roles of Goldilocks and Baby Bear are reversed. The book lends itself to retelling of the old, familiar tale.

After the first few pages of ELEPHANT BUTTONS by Noriko Ueno, ask children to predict what they think will come next. As children predict what the next animal is, they do the action, unbutton, step out and make some motion that would typify that animal.

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Some artists use a camera to tell a story. Tana Hoban is a well-known photographer who has made several books for children by using black and white photographs. In one of her books, LOOK AGAIN!, she asks you to look at one small part of a picture and guess what you see. Then you turn the page and see the whole picture. Children can make their own LOOK AND SEE books.

FROG GOES TO DINNER by Mercer Mayer is an example of a wordless book that can be used for an exercise in logical thinking. Purchase two copies of the book. Cut the books apart and mount the pages on tagboard. Place the pictures randomly and have children put the book together in correct sequence. Does your sequence make sense? WHAT WHISKERS DID by Ruth Carroll can also be used for sequence study.

Cooking is a valuable learning experience for young children. Many books lend themselves to counting and measuring skills as children create their own gingerbread boys or make their own "stone soup." Reading STREGA NONA by Tomie de Paola can be followed by making a big pot of spaghetti.

Another wordless book that lends itself to cooking in the classroom is PANCAKES FOR BREAKFAST by Tomie de Paola. Show the cover to the children and discuss what they and their families do when they want pancakes for breakfast. Invite the children to predict how the woman in the book is going to do it and identify the picture clues that lead to their predictions. In a second viewing of the book, particular emphasis can be placed on the dog and cat. Discuss what the animals are thinking, planning and feeling as the story progresses. A natural outgrowth of this story would be to make pancakes. Wheat grain can be ground in a blender. Butter can be made by having the children take turns shaking cream in a pint jar.

One thing to consider in making reading pleasurable for children is to make it easy for the beginning reader. Reading that is easy is also predictable. Ken Goodman has this to say about the important characteristics of early reading material,

> *Maybe the only really important thing is its predictability.*[1]

On the same subject Don Holdaway writes,

> *There is no more powerful strategy for decoding than this predictive search of the available verbal inventory--in reading, it is at the heart of word-solving skill.*[2]

One type of predictable material useful in initial reading instruction is the patterned or structured language material. One of the simplest patterns is the repetitive structure in which a certain phrase or sentence is repeated. I WAS WALKING DOWN THE ROAD by Sarah E. Barchas uses the repeated pattern as well as rhyme. Children can quickly join in chanting the repeated structure as well as in predicting the rhyming word in each couplet.

The patterned language selections often provide a point of departure for children's own creative writing as students improvise on the literary structure.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE by Bill Martin, Jr. is a story that lends itself to extension in several areas of the curriculum. The literary structure of the story is repetition.

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I tiptoed... No one was there.
I tiptoed... No one was there.

Children can tiptoe around the entire classroom chanting the highly predictable lines. Their vocabulary can be expanded by discussing and pantomiming other ways to move. Children can use the frame "I _____ into the _____" to make their own stories. Invite children to experiment with their own spooky pictures, using paint, chalk and paper. Older children may enjoy creating sound effects and musical background for a group of chanters.

OVER THE ROLLING SEA by Alan Mills and ONE WIDE RIVER TO CROSS by Barbara Emberley exemplify books with a refrain that is repeated over and over again that children can chant almost instantaneously. More verses can be written for additional sailors that travel over the rolling sea, and a new set of animals could make their way into Noah's Ark.

Books can be the springboard into a unit of study or aids during the study of a topic or theme. The following book may well introduce a study of animals and/or animal homes.

THE LIZARD'S SONG by George Shannon is a story about a lizard who sings a repeated refrain:

Zoli, zoli, zoli - zoli, zoli, zoli
Rock is my home - Rock is my home
Zoli, zoli, zoli

Bear comes along and wants to sing the song, but he cannot remember the words until the lizard suggests that Bear sing:

Zoli, zoli, zoli - zoli, zoli, zoli
Den is my home - Den is my home
Zoli, zoli, zoli

Children can brainstorm for other animals and their homes and write new verses for the song.

Children who experience literature are provided a rich source of ideas for the imagination. Developing the imagination takes on an urgency when one considers the following excerpt from Don Holdaway's, THE FOUNDATIONS OF LITERACY:

> *Sentimental things are said about the magical world of literature and the imagination, but few think of applying this driving force to the basic learning of literacy tasks. Nor do they think of remedying the situation for these children who have not learned to operate imaginatively. For such children, half their motivation for becoming literate is paralyzed, and so learning to read must be like learning to walk with one leg.*[3]

IT LOOKED LIKE SPILT MILK by George Shaw is a picture book that has a cloud resembling a common object on each page. As you read the story invite children to join in reading, "But it wasn't a _____."

Take a cloud walk. Discuss with children what they imagine they see in the clouds. Or, fold in half blue pieces of construction paper and place a blob of white paint in the center of the fold. Open the fold and invite children to stretch their imaginations and tell what they see.

In CHILDREN AND LITERATURE, John Stewig writes that to help build awareness and appreciation for the illustrator of a book, and. . .

> *. . . prevent children from missing the wealth of inventive,*

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imaginative illustration in books today, teachers should consciously study the illustrator's art. One way to sensitize children to the quality of book illustrations is to focus on the media, and give children hands-on opportunities to experience the techniques used by the artist.[4]

The art activities that may be designed as book-stretching experiences can be as varied as the books available. Each experience helps children internalize the story. The pleasure derived from experiencing art activities related to favorite books and authors will expand the children's enjoyment of reading. Mr. Shaw presents an unusual technique in IT LOOKED LIKE SPILT MILK. Allow children to look and speculate what they think he may have done to produce these simple but outstanding figures.

... is it white torn paper?
... is it blue paper torn and mounted on white?
... is it white paint on blue?
... other ideas?

Sometimes it is difficult to figure out exactly what an illustrator may have done. It is unimportant that we even know exactly what the artist may have done. The important thing is to get children involved in discussion and then do some experimenting of their own! Invite children to try torn paper art.

TORN PAPER ART

Try different kinds of paper.

... one time you may want to use only construction paper
... another time you may want to use magazine paper
... another time you may want to use only printed paper
... what other kinds of paper could you use?

Some ideas of pictures to make:

- *Make Jack jumping over the candlestick ... (or any Nursery Rhyme).*
- *From a 12" x 18" piece of construction paper, tear out the shape of your face. Tear out eyes (how many pieces do you need? what size should each piece be? etc.) Continue tearing out all features of your head including the hair and glue on the face. Use mirrors--talk about placement of features.*
- *Tear out a horn of plenty. Tear out the foods that you'd like flowing from the horn. Mount all on another sheet of paper. You may want to use magic marker to outline the foods and "ribs" on the horn of plenty.*
- *Make your own version of IT LOOKED LIKE SPILT MILK and share with others.*

Also share FREDERICK by Leo Lionni. In this story about a gentle mouse, Lionni uses gray torn-paper shapes with cut paper ears and tails to depict Frederick and his friends. The large and blocky designs, spread across facing pages, are simple but effective.

The technique of using collage came to Ezra Jack Keats in 1962 when Peter, a young black boy, was born in the now-modern classic and Caldecott winning book, THE SNOWY DAY. The book is twice enjoyed if children are led to observe the use of collage and have an opportunity to try out that medium themselves.

Collage is a technique that is often used in addition to water-

color, painting, printing and/or other techniques.

Familiar cultural sequences are often characteristic of predictable books and make reading easy. THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR by Eric Carle is built around the enumeration pattern and the days of the week. Carle has made a collage of tissue paper first, then cut collage to make the pictures. The end papers are overlaps of tissue paper collage.

TISSUE PAPER COLLAGE

Materials Needed:

Colored tissue paper (tear into different size pieces)
Wax paper
Liquid starch

Procedure:

Lay sheet of wax paper on the table. Lightly coat paper with liquid starch (paint with brush or dab with fingers).
Lay torn sheets of tissue on wax paper.
Dab on top of tissue with starch again. You may want to work with only a small section at a time.
Lay more tissue on top of starch.
Continue this layering (tissue, starch, tissue, starch, etc.) until you have about three layers of tissue on top of the wax paper.
Let dry 24 hours.
Peel wax paper off. Result will be a stiff mosaic-like tissue that is easy to cut and handle.
Tissue is ready for making animals, butterflies, letters, etc. Let children use their ideas.

Another book that has multi-uses in the classroom is the Norwegian folktale THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF. Events occur in such a way as to enable the reader to predict future events. Children can "chime in" when they think they know what is coming next. The story lends itself well to dramatization and children can get involved in sound effects and background music.

Invite children to look at Susan Blair's illustrations of THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF. Compare with other books that have woodcut illustrations: DRUMMER HOFF by Barbara and Ed Emberley; A STORY A STORY by Gail E. Haley; TOM TIT TOT by Evaline Ness; ONE WIDE RIVER TO CROSS by Ed Emberley; and ONCE A MOUSE by Marcia Brown. The block print process is beyond the capabilities of most children, primarily because of the danger of injury resulting from using sharp gouges to prepare the block. With careful instruction and equally careful supervision, fifth and sixth grade students can create their own linoleum cuts. The technique of cutting the block and the ability to make many copies of one design appeal to children.

Children can get the notion of how the technique is done by printing with styrofoam.

PRINTING WITH STYROFOAM

Materials Needed:

Styrofoam plates
Paint and brush or brayer roller
Dull pencil
Paper to print on
Newspapers

Cover the surface you will be printing on with several thicknesses of paper so you have a "sponge-like" surface to print on.
Cut the styrofoam plate into a desired design (trees, fish, butterflies, cars, animals or whatever).
Using the dull tool, crease in some features.

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Paint tempera on surface of your design (do not paint into the creases), or use the brayer roller and roll paint over the surface of the styrofoam design.
Press the painted side of the styrofoam design onto paper.

Another technique that illustrators use for book illustrations is texture rubbing.

TEXTURE RUBBING

Make a set of rubbing cards by gathering materials that have a texture. Empty plastic berry baskets and the nylon sacks that onions come in can be cut into flat sheets to make great background for rubbings.
Glue the flat textured material on a 6" x 9" tagboard card.
Let stand overnight to dry.
The advantage of having cards that children can take to their desks to work with makes the time to make them worthwhile.

Ideas to Try:

Illustrate one scene in a story...make the grass of one texture, make the roof of a house another texture, trees can be another texture, etc.

Make a background of rubbings. Cut out silhouettes of magazine paper or construction paper or wallpaper and glue on background of rubbings.

FISH IS FISH by Leo Lionni appears to be painted figures on a background of rubbings.

Cumulative tales are easily adapted to flannelboard storytelling. Simple characters can be colored on typing paper. Let children paint evaporated milk to back of figures and press to flannel. Lay a book on top of the figures and let stand overnight or until dry. Using scissors, cut out the figures backed with flannel. Some of the many stories adaptable for flannelboard use include THE GREAT BIG ENORMOUS TURNIP, a Norwegian folktale, THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN WHO SWALLOWED A FLY by Pam Adams and ONE FINE DAY by Nonny Hogrogian.

By listening to, reacting to, writing about, dramatizing and responding to literature in various ways, children grow in their appreciation and comprehension of this resource. Each involvement activity facilitates their linguistic and literary development, expands their knowledge about the world, brings them closer to independent reading ability and contributes to their lifelong involvement with books.

Developing the language arts curriculum around literature with students can bring new life and excitement to a classroom. But nothing will happen unless you take the plunge and begin. The more you work with children's literature, the more activities and ideas of how to use it will come to your mind.

FOOTNOTES

[1]K. S. Goodman, Reading: A Conversation with Kenneth Goodman (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman and Co., 1976a), p. 5.

[2]Don Holdaway, The Foundations of Literacy (New York: Ashton Scholastic, 1979), p. 53.

[3]Don Holdaway, The Foundations of Literacy (New York: Ashton Scholastic, 1979), p. 55.

[4]John Stewig, Children and Literature (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1980), pp. 40-41.

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Introducing the Author

Delores Sampson, a former elementary classroom teacher, has been a member of the Center for Teaching and Learning faculty since 1971. Currently, she is the Coordinator for the Small Schools Teaching/Learning Center, a consortium of forty-six small schools throughout the state of North Dakota. She also conducts workshops and inservice for teachers in and out of the state.

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